



Music

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These Relaxing Ambient Albums Will Probably Rock You (Softly) To Sleep

In which we recommend tunes that'll expedite your trip to zzz town.



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If the astronomic rise of the sleep industry says anything about our current culture, it's that we have a sleeping problem. Because everywhere we turn, there's always something new to buy that promises a better night's rest: Beds in boxes. Sleep trackers. Sound machines. Weighted blankets. Hell, Goop even sells [melatonin soft chews](#).



Charlotte Gomez / BuzzFeed



But allow me to hit rewind and make a case for the original, all-natural sleep aid: music.

As a kid of the '90s, I relied on a beat-up cassette tape of [The Land Before Time](#) soundtrack to lull me to sleep. It was everything to me. The record transported me to a world in which articulate dinos roamed the earth and then knocked me out cold — usually before the fourth track hit, Diana Ross's weepy "If We Hold on Together." (Was this also the track that first made me aware of my own mortality? No further questions at this time.)

This fixation on music as a sedative might explain why, in the decades since, I have found myself drawn to the wonderful world of ambient music.



Depth of Field



While not expressly designed for the purpose of sleeping, ambient music can often be incredibly meditative. The term "ambient" was coined by the English visionary Brian Eno in the late '70s. He defined it in the [liner notes](#) of his album [Ambient 1: Music for Airports](#) as music that's "designed to induce calm and space to think." While we now understand the genre to be much broader (due to its shared DNA with "electronic" and "experimental"), most would agree on one central criteria: Atmosphere and tone are always at the forefront. Our brains, as a result, are active enough to fill in the missing parts (often vocals) and just idle enough to surrender to some shut-eye.

People swear by this winning recipe, including Brian Sweeny, someone I spoke to while researching this story. He's the founder of [Ambient Church](#) — an experimental event series that brings artists into elaborate Brooklyn churches — and someone who knows a thing or two about bedside-music recs.

To be sure: I am not a prolific composer or a famed neuroscientist or an adjunct professor at Stanford! But I am very tired, and with some insight

from Sweeny, I've rounded up five sleep-inducing albums for your inquisitive listening pleasure.

Before we dive in, a caveat: The recs below do not include sleep-specific albums (see Max Richter's eight-hour, neuroscientist-backed opus [Sleep](#) and the not-nearly-as-scientific album [Sleeping Tapes](#) from actor and Dude Jeff Bridges), because I've never had much luck with them. You, however, might. Otherwise, the records below *do* work for me, and hopefully they'll do the same for you.

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Hiroshi Yoshimura — *Green* (1986)



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On “Green,” Japanese new age pioneer Hiroshi Yoshimura finds surprising harmony between his synthesizer — something commonly associated with artifice — and the sounds of the serene natural world. There are birds chirping and raindrops dancing on the ocean’s surface but it never once brings to mind the corny infomercial “healing music” of yesteryear.

Standout track: ["Feet"](#)

Julianna Barwick — *The Magic Place* (2011)

Charlotte Gomez / BuzzFeed



The ethereal Julianna Barwick creates otherworldly soundscapes using her voice, a loop station, and pedals. While best enjoyed in towering venues (like cathedrals, which bring to mind the cosmos), “The Magic Place” also functions perfectly as a bedtime companion. Plus, these densely layered tracks always leave something to be discovered for future listening.

Standout track: ["The Magic Place"](#)

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Woo — *Into the Heart of Love* (1990)

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“Into the Heart of Love,” like you might expect from its name, is the aural

equivalent of a warm embrace. Its lone vocal-heavy track, “Make Me Tea,” could easily pass as something off Helado Negro’s critically embraced [This Is How You Smile](#) from 2019 — and keep in mind it predates that album by nearly three decades. That’s what you call “holding up.”

Standout track: ["It's Love"](#)

lasos — *Inter-Dimensional Music* (1975)

Charlotte Gomez / BuzzFeed



For those who crave a more spiritually imbued experience, the San Francisco composer lasos’s debut album is a good place to start. In this shimmery vintage classic, expect flutes, pianos, and tons of synthetic textures that evoke the blurring lines of reality and fantasy. It’s upbeat but not abrasively so — leaving room for your mind to wander off to wherever it needs to go.

Standout track: ["Rainbow Canyon"](#)

Mary Lattimore — *Hundreds of Days* (2018)

Charlotte Gomez / BuzzFeed



You probably don't need me to tell you how relaxing harp music can be. But did you know that adding some electric guitar, synthesizer, piano, and sequencer can, to quote one Lattimore track title, make you *feel like you're floating*? Consider this album from the Sharon Van Etten/Kurt Vile collaborator your new way to decompress after a chaotic day. The world will seem to slow down.

Standout track: ["Hello From the Edge of the Earth"](#)

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Personal favourites:

Any of the albums released by Carbon Based Life Forms (even if a few of their songs are definitely not relaxed sleep material)

Weightless by Marconi Union (More typical relaxing ambient music)

9980 by connect.ohm.

I have a few playlists that Deezer generated... [Read more](#)

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If you are a fan of these recordings, you should really check out music by Sleeping At Last. He does a lot of vocal music (he's best known for his insanely awesome covers, which are often heard on Grey's Anatomy), but he also has done multiple outstanding ambient recording series.... [Read more](#)

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Anything by beach house is what puts me to sleep

♥



[jessicab45150a2fd](#)

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Plantasia by Mort Garrison is so good. I listen to it when I want to relax and fall asleep. It's kind of synth-y but chill af

♥

